

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NASSAU 00061 102027Z
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SUBJ: TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS TO GET CASINO GAMBLING

REF: NASSAU A-47 OF 12/2/77

1. LOCAL PRESS REPORTS GOVERNMENT IN TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS HAS WON ITS BATTLE FOR GAMBLING CASINO IN THE BRITISH COLONY WHEN AN ORDER WAS ISSUED TO ARTHUR WATSON, THE GOVERNOR, TO SIGN THE RELEVANT LEGISLATION. THIS ORDER CAME FOLLOWING TALKS IN DECEMBER 1977 BETWEEN OFFICIALS IN THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM TURKS AND CAICOS GOVERNMENT. TALKS BECAME NECESSARY FOLLOWING A REFUSAL BY GOVERNOR WATSON TO SIGN BILLS PASSED IN THE LEGISLATURE BY THE TURKS AND CAICOS GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE INTRODUCTION OF CASINO GAMBLING. IN EARLY DECEMBER TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT MINISTER C.W. (LIAM) MAGUIRE HEADED A THREE MEMBER DELEGATION TO LONDON WHERE THEY MET WITH TED ROLANDS, SECRETARY OF STATE IN THE COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, AND MS. JUDITH HART, AN OFFICIAL IN THAT OFFICE. A TURKS AND CAICOS GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID JANUARY 6 THAT "TALKS WENT VERY WELL" AND THAT SUBSEQUENT TO LONDON MEETING GOVERNOR WATSON WAS GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS TO
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 NASSAU 00061 102027Z

SIGN THE CASINO BILLS INTO LAW.

2. ON JANUARY 8 MINISTER MAGUIRE AND AL WILLIAMS, CHIEF OF TOWN PLANNING IN TURKS AND CAICOS, REPORTEDLY FLEW TO SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, TO MEET WITH A PROSPECTIVE DEVELOPER OF A CASINO FACILITY IN TURKS AND CAICOS AND TO GIVE THIS DEVELOPER COPIES OF THE SIGNED CASINO LEGISLATION INSTRUMENTS. THIS

TRIP REPORTEDLY SIGNALLED THE GO-AHEAD FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS AS CENTER FOR CASINO GAMBLING AND AN ANTICIPATED BOOM IN CONSTRUCTION OF HOTELS.

3. AMONG DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS PRESENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION BY GOVERNMENT IS RESORT COMPLEX CALLED "WHITE SANDS" - A PROPOSED 200 ROOM HOTEL ON 60 ACRES OF LAND ON SOUTH CAICOS. IN ADDITION, HOLIDAY INN REPORTEDLY HAS PLANS TO CONSTRUCT A 200 ROOM HOTEL WITH CASINO ON NORTH CAICOS AND A TEXAN REPORTEDLY HAS SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL TO CONSTRUCT A RESORT ON EITHER NORTH OR SOUTH CAICOS.

4. IN ADDITION ACCORDING TO TURKS AND CAICOS GOVT. SPOKESMAN, THE INTERNATIONAL SALT COMPANY (BELIEVED TO BE A U.S. SUBSIDIARY OF A DUTCH COMPANY) IS "STILL INTERESTED IN THE ISLANDS' SALT INDUSTRY POTENTIAL, AND DETAILED WORK AND INVESTIGATION BY EXPERTS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT."

5. COMMENT: UNEMPLOYMENT REMAINS CHIEF ECONOMIC PROBLEM IN TURKS AND CAICOS (LIKE THE BAHAMAS)(REF A). THE TURKS AND CAICOS GOVERNMENT HOPES THAT CASINO GAMBLING WILL ATTRACT DEVELOPMENT OF RESORT INDUSTRY AND CONSEQUENTLY ATTRACT A LARGER VOLUME OF TOURISTS TO THE ISLANDS TO BOLSTER ITS SAGGING ECONOMY LARGELY DEPENDENT IN TOURISM FOR PREDOMINANT SHARE OF ITS GNP.
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 NASSAU 00061 102027Z

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